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**Directorate of
Intelligence**

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Indications of
Political Instability
in Key Countries (U)

April 1983

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El Salvador

- The January rebellion by Colonel Ochoa generated heavy pressure in the armed forces for the resignation of Defense Minister Garcia. (S NF)

- Encouraged by armed forces disunity, the guerrillas demonstrated an increasing ability to overrun small towns and isolated military garrisons, inflicting heavy losses. (S NF)

- The government's weapons and manpower superiority generally kept the guerrillas from advancing into new areas, but the armed forces still suffer from fundamental weaknesses. (S NF)

- The government moved up the election from March 1984 to December 1983 and created a peace commission to stimulate wider political participation. (S NF)

Comment

Defense Minister Garcia has been a major force for moderation, but his enforcement of agrarian and other reforms has angered extreme rightists. Several key military officers, including the commander of the Air Force, Colonel Bustillo, also have criticized his management of the war effort. Garcia retains a loyal coterie of senior staff officers, however, and through recent maneuvering appears to have strengthened his position. Nevertheless, pressure by some elements of the armed forces for his resignation continues, and President Magana may still decide that Garcia's continuing presence undermines institutional unity. (S NF)

The strategic balance in the war remains unchanged, with neither side having the capacity to inflict a decisive single blow. Recent guerrilla successes in the north, however, suggest they are making increasingly effective use of local militia to complement their 4,000 to 6,000 full-time armed regulars. We expect that insurgent activity throughout the country will intensify soon, with a corresponding increase in government casualties, which now average 275 killed or wounded per month. (S NF)

In our judgment, the shortcomings of the Salvadoran armed forces suggest that their prospects for conducting a more aggressive war strategy between now and the elections are poor. According to US defense attache reporting, during recent fighting the armed forces demonstrated improved field communications, greater willingness to conduct night operations, and a new ability to infiltrate guerrilla lines with long-range reconnaissance patrols. These improvements were offset, however, by continuing weaknesses in command and control, poor tactical discipline, and disregard for communications security—problems that are unlikely to be resolved soon. (S NF)

We believe the government's decision to establish a peace commission and hold elections in December is designed to regain the political and psychological initiative and undercut insurgent calls for negotiations that could lead to a power-sharing arrangement. Despite sharp ideological divisions, the major political parties remain united in rejecting the guerrillas' "peace proposals," which they view as attempts to buy time and increase international support. By offering security guarantees, the government also hopes to encourage electoral participation by more moderate elements in the insurgent alliance, thus undermining guerrilla unity and prestige. (S NF)

The stepped-up election timetable will intensify existing strains in the fragile provisional government. Spurred by fears the government may repeat its electoral success of March 1982, the guerrillas will undoubtedly try to undercut the perceived legitimacy of the electoral process by exposing governmental divisions and demonstrating their own political and military strength. Recent guerrilla troop movements and resupply operations suggest that plans for a spring offensive, including increased targeting of the already damaged economic infrastructure, are well advanced. (S NF)